

# **Addressing the Gap: Attracting and Retaining Youth in Agriculture**



**Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture's  
Youth Advisory Committee**



## Table of Contents

Letter of Transmittal.....	4
1. Executive Summary.....	5
2. Background.....	6
3. Current state of the industry and key issues for youth.....	6
4. Accomplishments and Recommendations.....	7
Awareness and Promotion.....	7
Information and Training.....	9
Labour and Human Resources.....	10
Risk and Financial Management (including Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation).....	10
Transportation.....	11
Saskatchewan Young Ag-Entrepreneurs.....	12
Agriculture in the Classroom.....	12
Ministry of Agriculture Regional Offices.....	13
Research and Development.....	14
5. Appendix.....	15
A. Committee Member Biographies.....	15
B. Organizations and Individuals Engaged.....	17
C. Website Suggestions and comments.....	18

**Letter of Transmittal**

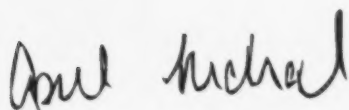
December 7, 2010

The Honourable Bob Bjornerud  
Minister of Agriculture  
Room 334 Legislative Building  
2405 Legislative Dr.  
Regina, SK S4S 0B3

Dear Minister Bjornerud:

I am pleased to present you with the final report on recommendations made by the Ministry of Agriculture's Youth Advisory Committee. The report is in response to the growing need to attract and retain youth in the agriculture industry and covers the work of the Committee, resource personnel and stakeholders.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "April Nichol".

April Nichol  
Chairperson  
Ministry of Agriculture Youth Advisory Committee

## **1. Executive Summary**

The Ministry of Agriculture's Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) was formed by the Minister of Agriculture in response to a growing need in the agriculture industry to attract and retain youth. The committee is composed of producers ages 18 to 35 who represent several regions across Saskatchewan and are involved in different sectors of the industry. The committee regularly met to develop and provide recommendations regarding youth attraction and retention.

The YAC's mandate was to provide recommendations on youth attraction and retention for the Saskatchewan agriculture industry. Working closely with organizations and industry representatives, the committee developed 12 recommendations for the Minister of Agriculture to consider. Throughout its tenure, the committee had influence within the Ministry of Agriculture and many of its suggestions were put into action before becoming a recommendation.

The committee's recommendations and perspectives on youth issues and opportunities will provide the Ministry of Agriculture with the tools necessary to develop a youth strategy. In the short term, this strategy will serve as the core of Ministry youth programs and initiatives. In the longer term, the strategy will assist industry in moderating the effects of the expected labour shortage.

The following are the recommendations developed by the committee for the Minister of Agriculture:

### **Awareness and Promotion**

*1.1 The YAC resolves that the Ministry of Agriculture include modern images of agriculture and producers in its informational and marketing materials.*

### **Information and Training**

*2.1 The YAC resolves that the Ministry of Agriculture review its website and make changes to improve online service, provide comprehensive industry information and inform youth about agricultural information.*

*2.2 The YAC resolves that the Ministry of Agriculture work with an industry partner, such as Saskatchewan Young Ag-Entrepreneurs (SYA), to develop, host and maintain a website that assembles existing and new*

*information relevant to young and beginning farmers on one easy-to-locate site.*

*2.3 The YAC resolves that the Ministry of Agriculture support the development of a program for beginning farmers as part of Growing Forward.*

### **Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation (SCIC)**

*3.1 The YAC resolves that on new contracts, customers have the option of choosing a five-year (building up to 10 years) accelerated data collection method for calculating individual yields, with the individual yield being calculated using the simple averaging method in years one to five and using the exponential smoothing method in years six to 10; and that SCIC look into the feasibility of offering this option to lapsed contract-holders.*

*3.2 The YAC resolves that one of its members work with SCIC and participate on the committee tasked with updating the Transfer of Earned Credit and Succession Policy to ensure that the aforementioned policy reflects the variety of transfer situations by expanding the criteria for eligibility and the means to proving that criteria.*

### **Saskatchewan Young Ag-Entrepreneurs (SYA)**

*4.1 The YAC resolves that the Ministry of Agriculture support the development of the SYA by providing financial support for projects and partnering on initiatives.*

### **Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC)**

*5.1 The YAC resolves that the Ministry of Agriculture recognize AITC as a necessary entity for enabling the delivery of agriculture programs to youth and demonstrate this support by increasing its long-term funding to AITC.*

*5.2 The YAC resolves that the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Environment agree to collaborate on incorporating agricultural content in the provincial school curriculum and ensure the provision of balanced, objective information in resources.*

*5.3 The YAC resolves that the Ministry of Agriculture encourage the Ministry of Education to build upon its success of cooperating with AITC to include an AITC*

endorsed resource on the curriculum resource list, and continue to communicate and cooperate with AITC in delivering Saskatchewan-related agriculture content to students.

*5.4 The YAC resolves that the Ministry of Agriculture encourage the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan and the Faculty of Education at the University of Regina to offer agricultural learning opportunities to education students. This could be done by allowing a representative of AITC to present and distribute resources to university students that will enable them to increase their agricultural knowledge base and thereby result in an increase in agricultural content taught to their future students.*

## **Ministry of Agriculture Regional Offices**

*6.1 The YAC resolves that the Regional Offices aim to be the primary spot for Saskatchewan producers to obtain industry information and advice, and that the Regional Services Branch implement the committee's suggestions outlined in the 2010 YAC report.*

## **2. Background**

The Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture's YAC was appointed for a two-year term on Jan. 14, 2009. The committee was created to address the issue that the industry needs young people to continue the success of the agriculture industry in Saskatchewan. Composed of youth between the ages of 18 and 35, seven members were selected to represent regions across the province. See Appendix A for biographies of each member.

In relation to the mandate, the committee chose to define youth as those with some direct or indirect experience or awareness of the agriculture industry. The success rate of attracting and retaining a younger demographic with agricultural awareness and knowledge may be higher than those without.

The committee met 10 times at locations around Saskatchewan, hearing from organizations and individuals knowledgeable about topics important to

fulfilling the mandate. See Appendix B for a list of organizations and individuals engaged in the process.

To ensure that recommendations put forth were reasonable, the committee opened lines of communication and worked cooperatively with representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture and other organizations to discuss and modify ideas and identify the most beneficial and influential recommendations.

In addition, the YAC conducted an environmental scan of youth-targeted programs and initiatives that were being undertaken inside and outside the industry.

## **3. Current State of the Industry and Key Issues for Youth**

Agriculture is the second largest goods-producing sector in Saskatchewan, second only to mining and petroleum. Contributing \$4.5 billion to the province's real GDP<sup>1</sup> in 2009, the sector creates more than 8.3 per cent of all direct agricultural employment opportunities<sup>2</sup>. In 2009, Saskatchewan farmers helped the province export \$8.078 billion worth of agri-food products to the world.<sup>3</sup> As agriculture is a billion-dollar business in Saskatchewan, attracting and retaining youth to continue the success of the industry are key issues.

According to the 2006 census by Statistics Canada, only about 10 per cent of farm operators in Saskatchewan were under the age of 35. Between 1996 and 2006, that number decreased nearly 50 per cent from 11,400 to 5,910 operators. As baby boomers retire throughout the province, the concern about youth replacing aging employees grows. This is especially true in the agriculture industry where in 2009, 42.1 per cent of farm operators were approaching retirement.<sup>4</sup> Given the declining trend in the number of farm operators under the age of 35, a large gap will exist as farm operators begin to retire. Beginning succession planning now is important to offset this gap.

Locating skilled labour for farms is also an issue facing the industry. Higher-paying occupations are cited as one reason that farmers are unable to attract and retain skilled workers.<sup>5</sup>

1. Enterprise Saskatchewan, <http://www.enterprisesaskatchewan.ca/economicoverview>

2. Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey

3. World Trade Atlas: Statistics Canada

4. Statistics Canada, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/95-629-x/2007000/4182410-eng.htm>

5. Ministry of Agriculture, YAC Meeting, February 5, 2009 and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2009 Dialogue Tour on Young Farmers and Farm Transfers, 2010.



Financial institutions such as Farm Credit Canada (FCC) have options to help young farmers with start-up; however, youth have indicated that they have difficulty gaining access to the necessary capital.<sup>6</sup> Through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), the *Canadian Agricultural Loans Act* also provides a way for farmers to obtain easier access to credit.

The public is also aware of this issue and an Ipsos Reid study conducted in 2009 about farm issues found that 24 per cent of non-farming adults in Canada cited "sustainability and profitability of farming" as the number one "top-of-mind" personal concern related to farming.<sup>7</sup> This concern may also affect the number of new entrants to farming because the public seems to view it as an unprofitable career. In addition, sectors are vulnerable to uncontrollable external factors that affect profitability such as the impact that H1N1 had on the pork sector in 2009.

Of concern to young and beginning farmers is the high capital requirement to start a farm operation. The average amount of a loan disbursed by FCC to young farmers (under 40 years of age) in Saskatchewan for 2009-10 was approximately \$89,847. In comparison, the average total liabilities (all loans that a young, primary borrower has through FCC) for a young farmer in Saskatchewan was \$553,000 in 2009-10.<sup>8</sup>

As a result of conducting an environmental scan of youth programs and initiatives in Saskatchewan and Canada, the committee discovered that some information exists to assist young and beginning farmers; however, there is not a convenient location to access the information comprehensively. In addition, access to young and beginning farmer information and programs can be difficult. In 2009, Federal Minister Jean-Pierre Blackburn, Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), embarked on a cross-Canada tour to speak to young and beginning farmers. Young farmers involved in the Dialogue Tour on Young Farmers and Farm Transfers (Dialogue Tour) also cited locating helpful information and programs as an issue.

AAFC launched a young farmer component on its website ([www.agr.gc.ca](http://www.agr.gc.ca)) on May 31, 2010, as part of its response to the Dialogue Tour. The site outlines national programs, organizations and information that

are of assistance to young and beginning farmers. The Dialogue Tour also mentioned training, and obtaining and accessing land as additional issues for young farmers.

As a result of the tour, the federal government also identified two areas where it could provide assistance beyond launching the website: creating an action plan for young farmers; and hosting a national forum for young farmers to assemble.

Since the YAC's inception in January 2009, the industry has been responding to young and beginning farmer issues in various ways. The Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS) hired a consultant to research and make recommendations about new entrants and intergenerational transfer. The Canadian Cattleman's Association (CCA) announced a Cattleman's Young Leaders Development Program that will provide training and mentorship opportunities to young producers.

#### **4. Accomplishments and Recommendations**

During the two-year term, the YAC discussed many topics, some of which resulted in recommendations and others that were accomplished or implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture prior to the completion of this report.

In targeting topics related to young producers, the committee chose to tie them directly to the mandate of youth attraction and retention. All accomplishments and recommendations fit under one or both goals. (See Model A.)

The YAC also met with a professor of human resources from the University of Regina, to learn more about the specific needs and traits of youth and the differences between generations.

#### **Awareness and Promotion**

The agriculture industry, and in particular farming, can possess a negative image among the public. Portrayed as a low-income, high-risk career, public perception of the industry and farming must be improved to entice more youth to choose agriculture as a career.

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6. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2009 Dialogue Tour on Young Farmers And Farm Transfers

7. Ipsos Reid, March 31st, 2009, Ontario Farm Animal Council, 2009 Farm Issues Study, Executive Summary

8. Derwin Arnstead, Acting Vice-President, Prairie Operations, Farm Credit Canada

The YAC Chair, April Nichol and a Ministry of Agriculture representative attended the National Agriculture Awareness Conference in 2009 to gain a broader public perspective. The YAC also discussed a variety of methods to communicate the positive aspects of agriculture and improve the public perception of this important industry.

Foremost to improving the public perception of the industry is updating the image of agriculture. Organizations, often through their advertisements and media, choose to portray farming and agriculture with traditional images. These images may invoke nostalgic memories and compassionate thoughts; however, they may also bring to mind hard-times and an old-fashioned way of life. These are not images youth find enticing. An Ipsos Reid study conducted in 2009 on farm issues found that "most Canadians maintain a positive impression of farming and are predisposed to thinking that farmers are "hard working" and "good people". Negative impressions of farming are mostly related to empathy with current economic challenges faced by the industry."<sup>9</sup>

The public need to be educated and made aware of how farmers operate today. Agriculture has significantly changed. Farmers are educated, business-savvy entrepreneurs who possess extensive training and knowledge. They utilize modern technologies, such as GPS, and manage employees and state-of-the-art machinery.

There are also positive aspects to choosing farming as a career that are not often communicated, such as owning your own business, choosing your own hours and having a variety of daily responsibilities.

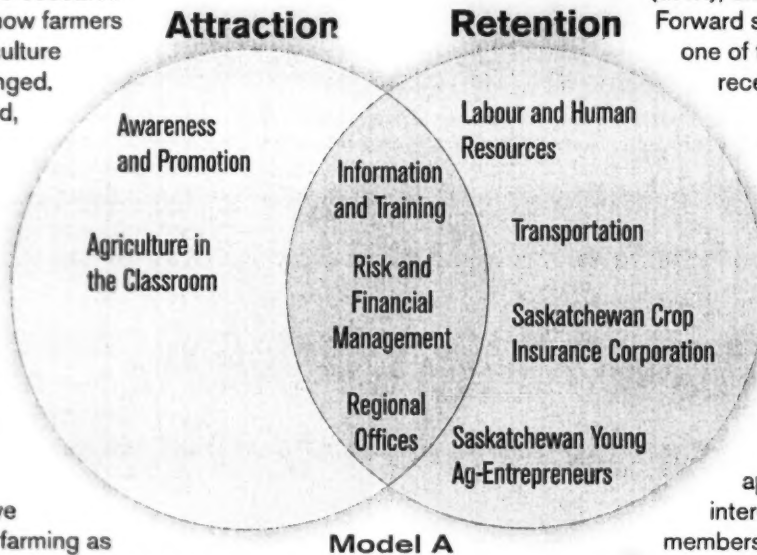
One of the benefits of updating agriculture's image is the attraction of new entrants to the industry. The YAC



Ministry booth at one of the major tradeshows it attends annually.

suggested that the Ministry of Agriculture start using modern images in its communication with the public and be aware of how it is portraying the industry. The Ministry has since implemented the suggestion and is using updated images in its promotional materials. The brochure for the Saskatchewan Agri-Value Initiative

(SAVI), under the Growing Forward suite of programs, was one of the first materials to receive this treatment.



In discussing the Ministry of Agriculture's presence at tradeshows, the YAC suggested that youth be represented at booths and that the Ministry incorporate a friendly, outgoing approach in garnering interest and attracting

members of the public to the booth. As a result of the comments made regarding the effectiveness of trade show booths, the Ministry will be implementing trade show training for employees and will be showcasing a more vibrant, youthful presence in future events.

9. Ipsos Reid, March 31st, 2009, Ontario Farm Animal Council, 2009 Farm Issues Study, Executive Summary



To ensure that there continues to be a focus on this initiative, the YAC made the following recommendation:

*1.1 The YAC resolves that the Ministry of Agriculture include modern images of agriculture and producers in its informational and marketing materials.*

Another method discussed in terms of awareness and promotion was engaging youth during their elementary and high-school years. Organizations such as 4-H and Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC) exist to educate and provide activities related to agriculture for elementary school-aged children. The Green Certificate Program (GCP) and Agriculture 30 offer high-school students an opportunity to learn about agriculture and farming prior to graduation. Engaging youth before they graduate high school is important because it is a critical time period when they decide what type of career and related education to pursue.

From YAC's discussions related to this matter, the Ministry of Agriculture responded by launching a scholarship program in October 2010, for grade 12 students pursuing a post-secondary education related to agriculture. The scholarship will reach students that may not have previously considered a career in the industry.

## **Information and Training**

While the committee was researching and discussing youth initiatives, they discovered how difficult it is to locate information about entering the industry, obtaining financing or related programs. Entry to the industry should be made as easy as possible for new entrants, and locating information, programs and opportunities is one way of doing that. In addition, young producers are using the internet and mobile communication devices frequently to assist them in conducting business. In order to connect better with youth, industry and the Ministry need to ensure that they are communicating and providing information to youth by way of media that they prefer.

Earlier this year the committee reviewed the Ministry of Agriculture website and made a number of suggestions on how it could better serve customers and become a better vehicle for communicating technical and program information. (See Appendix C for a list of suggestions.)

Also earlier this year the Ministry developed a website review committee to take into account the suggestions made by the committee and to ensure that the website

is taking advantage of technology while delivering exceptional online customer service.

The committee believes that the Ministry of Agriculture website should be the first page that farmers access when they begin their business day. The YAC made the following recommendation to reflect the importance of this issue:

*2.1 The YAC resolves that the Ministry of Agriculture review its website and make changes to improve online service, provide comprehensive industry information and inform youth about agricultural information.*

A variety of information is available for young and beginning farmers; however, locating it is often time-consuming and difficult. Websites exist that are targeted to young and beginning farmers but they are not comprehensive. As mentioned previously, both the YAC and youth involved in the cross-Canada tour conducted by Federal Minister Jean-Pierre Blackburn, Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), mentioned locating information in one convenient location as an issue.

The Ministry of Agriculture has partnerships with youth-focused organizations such as the Saskatchewan Young Ag-Entrepreneurs (SYA), and is knowledgeable about many of the programs and information available for young farmers to access. The YAC believes that the Ministry should leverage these partnerships and act as a catalyst to bring together information for young farmers. The benefit of establishing such a partnership would be in the flexibility that the partner organization would have in hosting and maintaining the all-inclusive website. The partner organization could be more efficient in responding to changes in technology, such as Facebook and online forums, and in utilizing them to effectively communicate with youth. In addition, an organization such as the SYA is already posting young and beginning farmer-relevant information, maintaining a Facebook page, and, through its membership, has an established base of young and beginning farmers accessing this information.

As a result of the preceding discussion, the YAC made the following recommendation:

*2.2 The YAC resolves that the Ministry of Agriculture work with an industry partner, such as SYA, to develop, host and maintain a website that assembles existing and new information relevant to young and beginning farmers on one easy-to-locate site.*

Through Growing Forward, the Ministry of Agriculture currently offers a farm business management program for farmers. The Farm Business Development Initiative (FBDI) was launched in 2009 to help producers adopt progressive business management practices and strategies in nine farm business management areas. Daryl Frank, YAC member, participated in the program and discussed his experiences and suggestions for the Ministry with the committee. It was suggested that the program application and reimbursement processes could be simplified to minimize the amount of paperwork per farmer. The Ministry will be taking this information into account as it reviews FBDI.

The success of a farm business operation increases as farm managers increase their knowledge of farm business management practices. FBDI allows farmers to accomplish this; however, the program is not specific to, nor does it have a component for, young and beginning farmers. There may be an opportunity under the Growing Forward suite of programs for a beginning and young farmer-targeted initiative. Ministry representatives presented the idea of a beginning farmer program to the committee and discussed potential components such as training, networking and a website for beginning and young farmers.

The committee provided positive feedback on the ideas and components and made the following recommendation:

*2.3 The YAC resolves that the Ministry of Agriculture support the development of a program for beginning farmers as part of Growing Forward.*

### **Labour and Human Resources**

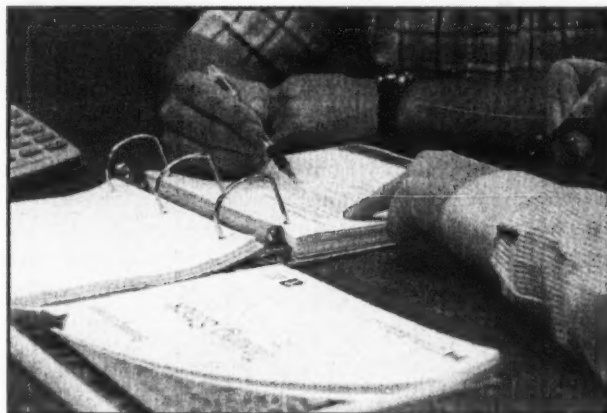
Experienced or qualified hired help is difficult to find and retain on the farm. At the 2009 Saskatchewan Young Ag-Entrepreneur Conference, Meyers Norris Penny cited the problems of over-capitalization and human resources as main issues on the farm. Competition from the oil fields, automotive dealerships and other businesses offering higher pay and/or regular hours seem to attract the labour.

The YAC discussed a variety of ideas, such as creating a farming apprenticeship program as part of a post-secondary agriculture program, a summer student program for farm labour with wage subsidies, Ministry of Agriculture-sponsored workshops and agency-offered support for benefit packages. Upon further examination of this area, the committee found there to be existing

programs, such as Agri-Connect, in place to help producers obtain labour and human resources. The lack of skilled labour could be mitigated by increasing awareness of the programs. The Ministry of Agriculture Regional Offices can also provide this awareness, information and support.

### **Risk and Financial Management**

In order to protect their large investments in capital, equipment and land, farming operations must pay particular attention to risk management. Programs such as Crop Insurance and AgriStability exist to offer such protection. The YAC discussed both Crop Insurance and AgriStability in terms of risk management and their connection to youth.



The FBDI program provides a needs-assessment document called *Taking Stock* to help farmers assess their business management needs.

Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation (SCIC) assists producers to manage their operations' production risk by offering flexible programs so that producers can tailor coverage to their operation.

The SCIC program has been identified as one of the primary areas that the Ministry can influence to be more responsive to youth. The YAC has analyzed and discussed information with SCIC representatives to develop recommendations that are both attractive to young producers and within the means of the program.

Crop Insurance as a business risk management program can be effective for experienced farmers. However, the committee felt that the current program does not have an option or special enhancements for young and beginning farmers. In addition, the changes that have occurred in the industry, such as new and emerging crops and technology, may not be reflected in SCIC programs.

Taking into consideration committee members personal situations and discussions and knowledge of other young farm business managers, the YAC believes that current SCIC programs are not appealing to young producers. From the committee's perspective current coverage levels do not justify the cost of the program for young producers. Part of the reason for this is that young producers have not been in the program long enough to establish their own yield data and experience discount. Achieving the maximum experience discount can take more than 10 years to establish because one credit is awarded for each claim-free year. For a young business the first years are the most financially critical. A more realistic discount and accurate coverage levels could have an impact on the business success.

The YAC and SCIC explored various program options such as premium rebates, program discounts, yield establishment methods, contract recognition and out-of-province program models in their discussions about how to make SCIC programs more beneficial and attractive to youth. Upon conclusion of discussions, they targeted two areas that they felt will have the most impact in serving the needs of young and beginning farmers: data collection; and the transfer of earned credits and succession policy. Improving both areas was seen as a way to increase youth program participation resulting in a stronger program for all users. YAC made its recommendations with the knowledge that the Transfer of Earned Credits and Succession Policy is currently being updated to reflect changes in the industry.

The following resolutions are a result of the in-depth discussions:

*3.1 The YAC resolves that on new contracts, customers be given the option of choosing a five-year (building up to 10 years) accelerated data collection method for calculating individual yields, with the individual yield being calculated using the simple averaging method in years one to five and using the exponential smoothing method in years six to 10 and that SCIC look into the feasibility of offering this option to lapsed contract-holders.*

*3.2 The YAC resolves that one of its members will work with SCIC and participate on the committee tasked with updating the Transfer of Earned Credit and Succession Policy to ensure that the aforementioned policy reflects the variety of transfer situations by expanding the criteria for eligibility and the means to proving that criteria.*

AgriStability is a government-administered program that provides a payment to producers when their income, determined by comparing calculated margins, falls below a certain level. Representatives of the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture met with the YAC to talk about the AgriStability program and how it serves young and beginning farmers. They also reviewed AgriInsurance, AgriRecovery and AgriInvest. The group discussed various aspects of the AgriStability program with the representatives and concluded that the program was serving all demographics of farmers well.

Obtaining capital to finance an operation is also important in starting or maintaining a farm operation. FCC has a variety of programs targeted at young farmers and representatives from the organization spoke to the YAC about its lending products and youth strategy. FCC earns its business through the customer experience that they provide and statistics show that they have the largest share of the Saskatchewan agriculture industry market than any one bank. Following the presentation and discussion, committee members commended FCC for supporting youth through its initiatives.

No recommendations were proposed regarding AgriStability or obtaining capital to finance an operation.

## **Transportation**

Freight is one of the largest costs to farmers. YAC member Derek Tallon gave a presentation to the group about transportation. The goal of the presentation was to help the committee understand issues related to the topic including level of service, branch line abandonment and the increased distance that grain is being moved by truck. A representative from the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture attended.

Intervention for short-line railways involves regulatory change and it is difficult to pass regulation on railways or even create a more competitive environment. However, a mechanism exists in the form of a Level of Service Review Committee (Review Committee) that government can use as a conduit for shipper and producer opinions. The Review Committee also uses other forums to gather information and is accepting submissions. They will bring forward issues, such as lost incentives due to time limits, informal abandonments, definition of adequate service, better



mechanisms for speed of dispute resolution and degree of competition (inter-switching provisions) to the federal government.

The YAC gained a better understanding of transportation and the issues surrounding it, but tabled discussion due to the enormity of the topic.

### **Saskatchewan Young Ag-Entrepreneurs (SYA)**

Networking and support are important components of being a successful farm manager. As a young or beginning farmer, having a strong network of peers helps managers share information and feel a sense of community. In an article entitled, "How to find people you'd want to do business with", by Michael Hughes, entrepreneur, business coach, trainer, professional speaker and author, states that "networking in business is about creating more opportunities to buy from, sell to, or partner with the people you want to deal with."<sup>10</sup>



Saskatchewan's 2010 Outstanding Young Farmers, Ryan and Lauren Maurer and their children.

In Saskatchewan, one of the SYA's goals is to provide networking opportunities for young ag-entrepreneurs. They also offer training opportunities for young farmers to increase their knowledge of business subjects. The networking and

training events foster the exchange of views and ideas and the promotion of a sustainable agriculture industry.

One of the SYA's goals is to become the premiere organization for young and beginning farmers. One of the ways they hope to achieve this goal is by increasing membership so that they can provide more workshops and networking events. Currently, the SYA has attracted 62 members and hosts an annual conference, business management training seminars and informal networking events. In the future, they hope to continue with these activities and bring in respected speakers to present to its members.

The YAC views the SYA as an important organization for retaining young farmers. The organization provides both formal and informal opportunities for producers to communicate with like-minded peers and develop a network for buying and selling, partnering and sharing knowledge.

To achieve the SYA's goal of attracting more members and increasing membership, the YAC made the following resolution:

*4.1 The YAC resolves that the Ministry of Agriculture support the development of the SYA by providing financial support for projects and partnering on initiatives.*

As members of the SYA and YAC, Daryl Frank and Jeff Prosko abstained from voting on the recommendation.

### **Agriculture in the Classroom (AIRC)**

The YAC met with the AIRC Executive Director to find out how school-aged children are educated about agriculture and to what extent the topic is included in the curriculum in Saskatchewan. The YAC believes it is important to educate children about agriculture throughout their school years to ensure that they are receiving objective information, allowing them to make an informed decision about the industry as a possible career choice.

AIRC is an organization that increases awareness and knowledge of agriculture to elementary school-aged children. They provide tools to teachers so they can teach children about the benefits of agriculture and where their



Three young participants in AIRC's Little Green Thumbs program.

food comes from. This facilitates an understanding of the industry and helps to expose the children to the opportunities that are available.

Educating children about agriculture in the province also instills pride in where food comes from and is an opportunity to improve negative perceptions about the

10. Canadian Farm Business Management Council, Canadian Farm Manager Newsletter, December 2007/January 2008, <http://www.farmcentre.com/News/CFMNewsletter/Article.aspx?newsletter=27a1f2ff-5190-4577-90d7-94c97474a09&id=75a64097-40e3-4a38-b5d2-f00ae2f06814>

industry. For instance, the AITC Little Green Thumbs Program is an intensive, hands-on project that connects children to agriculture through active participation in growing food. Before and after completing the program, teachers are asked to rate the majority of student's attitudes toward the environment. Before participating in the program, 6.9 per cent of students were very caring compared to 72.4 per cent after participating.

Using AITC material in the classroom is voluntary by teachers. Agriculture does exist in the curriculum; however, the content of the recommended resources and lack of knowledge by teachers may not result in a balanced view of the industry. Agriculture has a broad application. By working together in areas such as science, environment and health, government could increase the amount of agriculture in the curriculum by incorporating the topic where it coincides with an established subject. For example, government could collaborate to include agriculture when teaching about the relation of food production to population in elementary schools.

In addition, providing teachers with more opportunities to learn about agriculture and the breadth of the topic will enable them to gain a greater understanding. More knowledgeable instructors are better able to integrate the topic into their lessons and discuss from all points of view. Universities do incorporate agriculture into class content; however, given the large amount of information that must be covered, university students only obtain a small part of the picture regarding agriculture.

As a result of close cooperation between AITC and the Ministry of Education, renewed Grade 4 Social Studies curriculum contains an outcome specific to the study of the impact of agriculture in Saskatchewan. The renewed curriculum is available for Saskatchewan teachers. In addition, the Ministry of Education list of recommended resources will include an AITC-produced agriculture resource for Grade 4 classes. AITC, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Agriculture have all agreed that the resource contains accurate, relevant and objective information. Teachers across Saskatchewan will have on-line access to this resource.

The YAC made the following recommendations regarding agricultural awareness and education:

*5.1 The YAC resolves that the Ministry of Agriculture recognize AITC as a necessary entity for enabling the delivery of agriculture programs to youth and demonstrates this support by increasing the long-term funding to AITC.*

*5.2 The YAC resolves that the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Environment agree to collaborate on incorporating agricultural content in the provincial school curriculum and ensure the provision of balanced, objective information in resources.*

*5.3 The YAC resolves that the Ministry of Agriculture encourage the Ministry of Education to build upon its success of cooperating with AITC to include an AITC endorsed resource on the curriculum resource list, and continue to communicate and cooperate with AITC in delivering Saskatchewan-related agricultural content to students.*

*5.4 The YAC resolves that the Ministry of Agriculture encourage the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan and the Faculty of Education at the University of Regina to offer agricultural learning opportunities to education students. This could be done by allowing a representative of AITC to present and distribute resources to university students that will enable them to increase their agricultural knowledge base and thereby result in an increase in agricultural content taught to their future students.*

### **Ministry of Agriculture Regional Offices**

In 2009, the Ministry of Agriculture brought back extension services to farmers and re-opened 10 regional offices across the province. The goal of the offices is to provide farmers and ranchers, producer groups and industry with access to production and business information and services.



Saskatchewan Agriculture has 10 Regional offices across the province.

The YAC discussed how the offices can be of assistance to all farmers and help retain farm business



managers in the industry. In addition, they visited the Watrous Regional Office in July 2009. The committee supports the new level of service provided by the offices and believe that they will provide free, unbiased information to farmers and the public.

In order to reach young producers, the YAC discussed how regional offices could use technology in disseminating timely information, upcoming events and new and updated program information. All 10 regional offices have an electronic newsletter called *Stay Connected* that is sent out to subscribers. Each newsletter is specific to the events and topics of interest for the region.

In addition, the YAC made suggestions about how regional specialists could make themselves even more available in person. One suggestion was to extend the length of office hours during important seasons, such as spring seeding.

Furthermore, the regional specialists regularly interact directly with the public. In helping to promote agriculture and increase awareness, partnerships between the offices and agricultural organizations, such as AITC and 4-H, would enable specialists to interact with youth while informing and engaging them about the industry and its opportunities. Since this discussion, 4-H has partnered with the regional offices to collaborate on programming such as workshops, seminars, guest/expert speakers and judging for 4-H competitions.

While discussing labour and human resource issues on the farm, the YAC saw an opportunity and connection with the regional offices. The YAC acknowledges that farm managers may not be familiar with human resource practices. Although FBDI exists to provide producers with training on this topic, the YAC advised that the regional offices should be knowledgeable about this topic, as well as non-government programs, and be the point of contact for producers wanting to educate themselves and obtain advice and information. Programs such as the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (SINP) and AgriVenture help producers obtain skilled labour in non-traditional ways. SINP facilitates the nomination of applicants, such as skilled workers who live overseas, to the federal government for landed immigrant status. AgriVenture is an agricultural exchange program for students wanting to travel overseas for farm work experience. Lastly, the YAC suggested that the regional offices host seminars

and workshops during the winter months on topics such as labour and human resources.

Suggestions posed by the YAC have been communicated to the regional offices. The YAC has identified that the regional offices provide a wealth of information to producers both inexperienced and experienced. In order to ensure that producers are informed and aware of how the regional offices can serve them, the YAC made the following recommendation:

*6.1 The YAC resolves that the Regional Offices aim to be the primary spot for Saskatchewan producers to obtain industry information and advice, and that the Regional Services Branch implement the committee's suggestions outlined in the 2010 YAC report.*

## **Research and Development**

The YAC met with a Ministry representative to learn more about research and development (R&D) in the industry. The Ministry of Agriculture invests in R&D because this research results in new products, more efficient and better processes, new economic opportunities, jobs and growth as well as in more successful businesses through producer profitability.

Through a budgeted \$16.9 million, the Ministry of Agriculture supports programs such as the Agriculture Development Fund (ADF), Agricultural Demonstration of Practices and Technologies (ADOPT) and the Saskatchewan Agri-Value Initiative (SAVI).

The YAC was appreciative of the information provided about the Ministry's current role and initiatives in R&D. However, in the future, there is opportunity to discuss market development for crops where Saskatchewan is a global leader such as lentils, mustard and canaryseed.



The Ministry of Agriculture is committed to supporting innovative research programs.

## **5. Appendix**

### **Appendix A Committee Member Biographies**

#### **April Nichol, Chair - Qu'Appelle, SK**

April has confirmed agriculture as both a career and lifestyle choice and brings a wealth of experience to the committee. She was raised on a mixed farm near Qu'Appelle and has worked in the industry for over 10 years professionally as well as taking an active role in the everyday farm activities.

April holds a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture from the University of Saskatchewan (2002) with a major in Plant Science and a minor in Agribusiness.

April's interest in the family farm led her to pursue a career in agriculture. She has had experience working in the grain industry with Cargill Ag Horizons, in the crop protection industry with Syngenta Crop Protection, and is currently working for Blair's Crop and Livestock Nutrition in the areas of agronomy and business development. April brings operational experience and a combination of management skills, program delivery expertise, financial insight and a sound understanding of agricultural issue management to the Committee.

Agriculture is foundational in April's personal life. Together with her husband Chad, they own and operate a 3,000 acre grain farm near Qu'Appelle. Although starting their own business in agriculture has had its challenges, it is an industry that April and her husband are passionately involved in. April is pleased to be a part of the Youth Advisory Committee.

April is also active within her community:

- o Director/Secretary, Forever Friends of Hope Foundation Inc.;
- o Canadian Western Agribition Grain and Forage Committee;
- o Active volunteer in a variety of community activities, including 4-H Saskatchewan.

April and her husband have one daughter, Natalie.

#### **Daryl Frank - Southey, SK**

Daryl operates a 6,500 acre grain farm seven miles south of Southey overlooking the Qu'Appelle Valley. After completing the Agricultural Mechanics program at SIAST, he worked at Southey Farm Supply from 1997 to 2002. During this time Daryl was able to work on the family farm and in 2003 took over the third-generation operation. The grain and oilseed farm increased from 2,000 acres in 2003 to over 6,500 acres in 2010. He is always looking for more efficient and cost effective ways to run a successful operation.

Daryl is a member of the Western Farm Leadership Council and is the treasurer for the Saskatchewan Young Ag-Entrepreneurs. He believes the voice of young farmers will be an important factor to the future of farming in our province.

#### **Max Halyk - Melville, SK**

Max and his wife Janelle are fourth-generation farmers who are raising their family on the original family homestead west of Melville. The couple have a nine-month-old daughter, Jaylee, and another child on the way.

They operate a mixed farm consisting of 350 cow/calf pairs and 4,000 acres of mixed farmland.

Max graduated from high school in 2001 and continued his education at Olds College. Upon graduation in 2004, he received a diploma in Agriculture Management with a major in Feedlot Management.

In addition to operating the family farm, he is currently a division councillor for the RM of Stanley.

**Jeff Prosko - Rose Valley, SK**

Jeff grew up on a farm near Rose Valley in northeastern Saskatchewan. He attended K-12 schooling in Rose Valley, graduating in 2003. Afterward, Jeff moved to Saskatoon where he attended the University of Saskatchewan and completed his Diploma in Agriculture in the spring of 2005.

Jeff moved back to Rose Valley to help manage his family's farm, which consists of about 9,000 acres of cropland where they grow canola, oats, barley and wheat. Over the years the farm has grown and diversified, producing a variety of crops including alfalfa and organic crops. Jeff and his parents have also diversified into other areas including custom spraying, combining, trucking, seed production and other ventures.

Jeff is currently involved with the Saskatchewan Young Ag-Entrepreneurs. Throughout the year he is also involved in a variety of events in his local community and surrounding area. Jeff also enjoys attending trade shows, marketing seminars and other agricultural-related events whenever possible.

**Landon Swityk - Spiritwood, SK**

Landon currently runs a mixed farming operation with his father 50 km northwest of Spiritwood. The family farm is uniquely surrounded by the Northern Forest Reserve and consists of roughly 1,200 acres of cropland and 100 Black Angus cow/calf pairs.

After graduating from high school in June 2006, Landon spent one-and-a-half years working between the farm and Alberta's oil patch. Currently he is employed at Martodam Motors (1983) Ltd. in Spiritwood as an Agricultural Salesman.

**Derek Tallon - Lafleche, SK**

Derek resides on a farm in southern Saskatchewan near the town of Lafleche. He completed his Bachelor of Science in Agribusiness from the University of Saskatchewan in 2009. Along with his father, he crops 6,500 acres of cereals, pulses and oilseeds, in addition to operating a custom spraying business.

**Colin Wilgenbusch - Halbrite, SK**

Colin grew up on the family farm near Halbrite where he now farms 350 head of cattle and 3,000 acres of cropland with his father and brother. When he is not working on the farm he is employed in the oilfields near Weyburn.

From 1997 to 2003, Colin successfully owned and operated a custom hauling livestock business where he learned the ins and outs of managing an agribusiness.

He is enthusiastic about attracting youth to the agriculture industry and increasing awareness about the viable business options that exist through diversification and other strategies.

## **Appendix B**

### **Organizations and Individuals Engaged**

#### **Agriculture in the Classroom**

Sara Shymko, Executive Director

#### **Farm Credit Canada**

Derwin Arnstead, Director, Marketing Strategy and Products

Pat Parrott, Manager, Marketing Strategy

#### **Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation**

Arlan Frick, Analyst

Jeff Morrow, Executive Manager, Research and Development

Keith Hayward, Senior Policy Analyst

#### **Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture**

Abdul Jalil, Director, Agriculture Research Branch

Brenda Stefanson, Regional Farm Business Management Specialist, beginning farmer program ideas

Carmen Cline, Acting Manager/Policy Analyst, AgriStability

Dan Schmeiser, Manager, transportation

Daphne Cruise, Regional Crops Specialist, advisor

Doris Morrow, Manager, Business Management Services, advisor

Gerry Holland, Farm Business Management Specialist (now Manager, Business Programs, Enterprise Saskatchewan), beginning farmer program ideas

Jenna Webb, Media Relations Officer, media training

Michelle McConwell, Coordinator, Youth Programming and Marketing, committee facilitator, beginning farmer program ideas

Mike Pylypchuk, Provincial Business Management Specialist, Farm Business Development Initiative

Milo Grimsrud, Policy Analyst, AgriStability

#### **University of Regina**

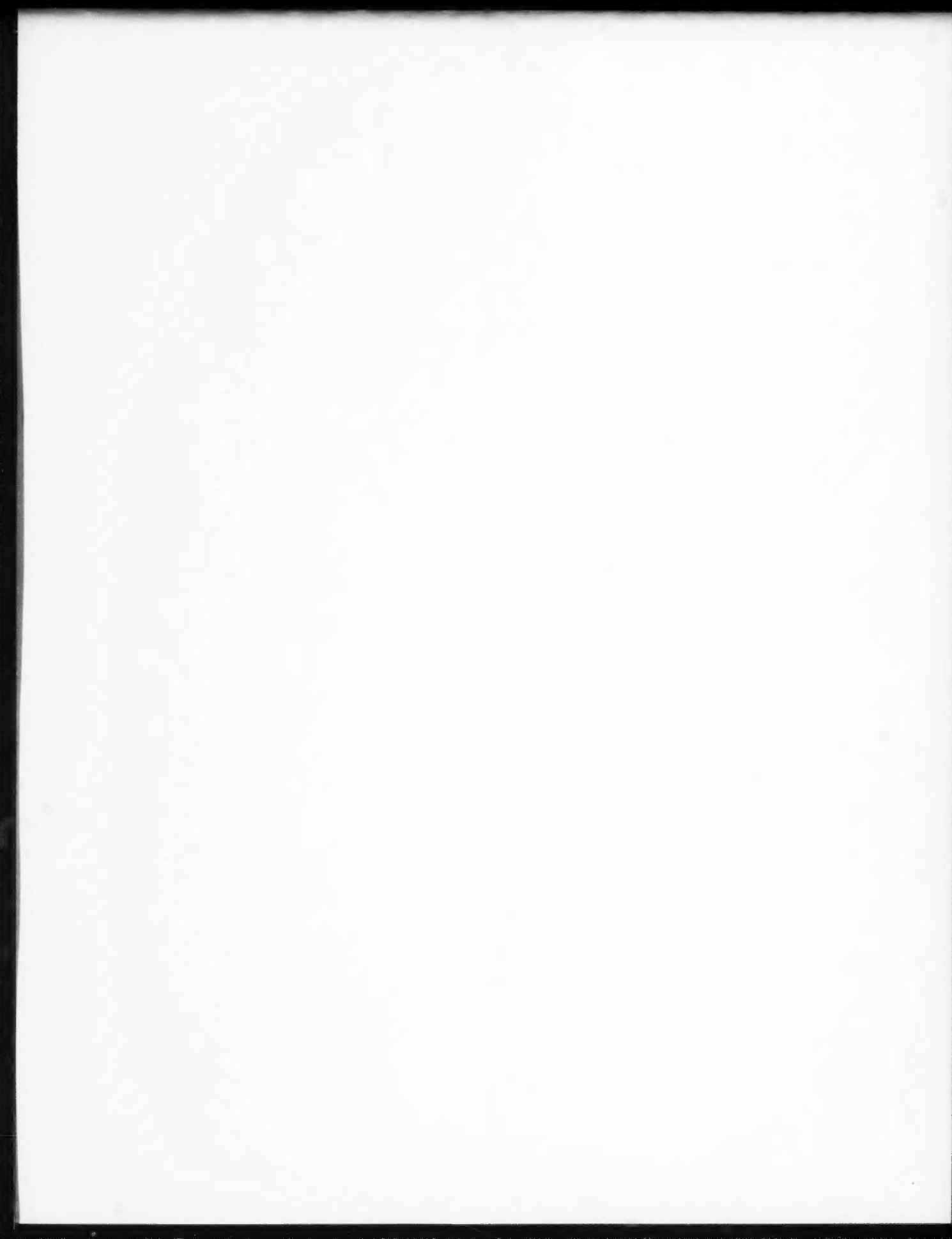
Ron Camp, Associate Professor of Human Resource Management/International Business, Generations in the Workplace: Managing Millenials

## **Appendix C**

### **Website Suggestions and Comments**

- The Ministry website should be a homepage or starting point for producers to obtain information that they need on a regular basis; for instance, weather, private sector sites, marketing information and consultants. Alberta's "Roping the Web" is an example of a website providing this service.
- A good website can be a tool for attracting youth.
- A text-only webpage option would allow for faster download and upload times for dial-up users and provide access for people with mobile devices.
- Documents on the Ministry of Agriculture site are currently too long. Splitting-up documents into sections and providing links to each section could help users locate the information they are looking for quickly and efficiently.
- The information and links on both sides of the Ministry's webpages decrease the amount of information that can fit in the middle. The decreased room causes documents to seem longer than they actually are and causes users to scroll to locate information. To make more room on the webpages, the Ministry of Agriculture site could locate links for important topics across the top. Important topics could include:
  - Industry and links to organizations;
  - Regional office specialists (crops, forage, livestock and business management);
  - Information for young farmers;
  - Weather (historical, maps, normal weather for that time of year);
  - Markets (live links to Minneapolis and Chicago);
  - Futures and commodity charts;
  - Agriculture in the news;
  - Alerts (for example, pests); and
  - Link to Canadian Wheat Board.
- Make the site customizable. For instance, selecting the geographical area will result in the weather for a user's area showing up when they use the site.
- Include live market reports and union securities commentary on the website. For example, "Alberta Call of the Land" is on the radio each Friday. This program and others like it could be streamed on the website.
- Update the search engine because it is not functioning well and is an important part of the site.





Presented December 2010



Saskatchewan  
Ministry of  
Agriculture